

HOUSE BILL 432  
By Campfield

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49,  
Chapter 7, relative to higher education.

WHEREAS, the General assembly of the state of Tennessee recognizes students' rights to academic freedom and rights to freedom from discrimination on the basis of political or religious beliefs; and

WHEREAS, students enrolled in state postsecondary educational institutions have the right to information concerning grievance procedures for the protection of their academic freedoms; and

WHEREAS, it is determined to be in the best interests of the state to direct the governing board of state postsecondary educational institutions to adopt a grievance procedure for use in enforcing students' rights; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 7, Part 1, is amended by adding the following as a new appropriately designated section:

49-7-1( ).

(a) Students enrolled in state postsecondary educational institutions shall have the following rights:

(1) The right to expect that their academic freedom will not be infringed upon by instructors who create a hostile environment toward their political or religious beliefs or who introduce controversial matter into the classroom or course work that is substantially unrelated to the subject of study;

(2) The right to expect that they will be graded solely on the basis of their reasoned answers and appropriate knowledge of the subjects they study and that they shall not be discriminated against on the basis of their political or religious beliefs;

(3) The right to expect that their academic institutions shall distribute student fee funds on a viewpoint neutral basis and shall maintain a posture of neutrality with respect to substantive political or religious disagreements, differences, and opinions; and

(4) The right to be fully informed of their institutions' grievance procedures for violations of academic freedom by means of notices prominently displayed in course catalogues, student handbooks, and on the institutional web site.

(b) State postsecondary educational institutions shall publicize the statewide institutional grievance procedure by which a student may seek redress for an alleged violation of any of the rights specified in this section in course catalogues, student handbooks, and on the institutional website.

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-7-202(c), is amended by adding the following as a new appropriately designated subdivision:

(\_\_\_) Develop, monitor, and enforce a statewide institutional grievance procedure by which a student may seek a redress of grievance for an alleged violation of any of the rights specified in this act.

SECTION 3. The commissioner of the Tennessee higher education commission is authorized to promulgate rules and regulations to effectuate the purposes of this act. All such rules and regulations shall be promulgated in accordance with the provisions of Tennessee Code Annotated, title 4, chapter 5.

SECTION 4. This act shall take effect upon becoming law, the public welfare requiring it.